

VZCZCXRO3155
RR RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM
DE RUEHJA #1930/01 1970320
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 160320Z JUL 07
FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5445
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0911
RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY 3365
RUEHSV/AMEMBASSY SUVA 0104
RUEHUM/AMEMBASSY ULAANBAATAR 0077
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 1594
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHHJJPI/USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 001930

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL PGOV EAID KDEM ID

SUBJECT: CODEL PAYNE AND HDAC FIND RECEPTIVE AUDIENCE IN JAKARTA

REF: A. JAKARTA 1892 (CODEL MEETS DEFMIN)

- 1B. JAKARTA 1845 (CODEL MEETS SBY)
- 1C. JAKARTA 1759 (CODEL SCENESETTER)

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SUMMARY

11. (U) On July 4-7, CODEL Payne visited Jakarta as part of the House Democracy Assistance Commission's (HDAC) ongoing legislative strengthening program in Indonesia. In a whirlwind three-day visit, CODEL Payne met with President Yudhoyono (Ref B), Defense Minister Juwono (Ref A) and top legislators from the Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR). CODEL Payne engaged with parliamentarians on a host of issues and in a variety of fora at the DPR, in a series of breakfast and lunch meetings, and during a reception at the Ambassador's residence for members of the DPR's U.S.-Indonesia Caucus. Throughout their visit, Representatives Donald Payne (D-NJ), David Dreier (R-CA), and James Moran (D-MD) consistently stressed the need to develop an independent Indonesian legislature, and noted the importance of attracting talented, independent DPR support staff as part of this process (Note: presently the DPR largely relies on civil servants employed by the Secretariat and accountable only to the Executive branch for staffing. End Note). Indonesian interlocutors from the President on down to individual parliamentarians proved receptive to this message, and demonstrated a palpable enthusiasm for HDAC's mission that was reportedly lacking during HDAC's two previous trips to Indonesia. In the most notable manifestation of the DPR's obvious enthusiasm for the visit, DPR Speaker Agung Laksono urged CODEL Payne to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) formalizing the relationship between HDAC and the DPR; however, the delegation declined to sign the Indonesian text. HDAC will consider proposing its own MOU language instead. End Summary.

CODEL PAYNE MEETS SPEAKER LAKSONO

12. (U) On July 5, CODEL Payne met with Speaker Laksono, Commission I Chairman Theo Sambuaga, and Inter-Parliamentary Vice Chairman Andi Ghalib. Chairman Laksono welcomed the

CODEL to Indonesia, spoke about his own efforts at legislative reform, and agreed with the CODEL's assessment that a stronger legislature would help expedite the democratic consolidation process in Indonesia. Congressman Payne recounted for the Speaker the group's conversation earlier that day with President Yudhoyono (Ref B), and noted that the President had also endorsed the idea of a stronger independent legislative branch of government. Congressman Payne underscored HDAC's belief that the DPR would need to bolster the number of expert staff available to help Indonesian legislators conduct the nation's business. He further emphasized that the DPR's current staffing structure, currently under Executive branch oversight, should be reformed to develop a staff cadre that would report directly to the legislative branch.

¶3. (U) Congressman Dreier briefed the Speaker on HDAC's mission and noted that Indonesia was the Commission's largest and most geopolitically significant partner. Bearing in mind the DPR's previous sensitivity to the optics of receiving democratic strengthening assistance from the United States, Dreier noted that democracy was still a work in progress in the United States as well. Congressman Moran discussed the importance of accounting for past human rights transgressions as a necessary step towards progressing as a nation, and highlighted the need for additional resources to help the DPR continue to develop as an effective institution.

¶4. (U) Chairman Laksono closed the meeting by asking the CODEL to consider endorsing a formal MOU with the DPR that would commit HDAC to long-term assistance in the form of exchanges, technical assistance, and continued cooperation. Representative Payne thanked the Speaker for the proposed MOU, characterizing it as a clear symbol of the DPR's seriousness of purpose, and agreed to review the document carefully.

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CODEL PAYNE ENGAGES WITH THE DPR

¶5. (U) The three Congressmen and six staffers in CODEL Payne participated in an intense series of meetings at the DPR that stretched out over the better part of two days. The Representatives met at one point or another with the Speaker, the DPR Reform Implementation Team, the Legislative Council, the DPR Administration Committee, the Finance and Banking Committee, leaders from all ten political party factions, groups of legislators from all ten party factions, alumni participants in a 2006 HDAC exchange to the United States, the U.S. Indonesia Caucus, and USAID's legislative strengthening partners. CODEL Payne staffers participated in many of the same meetings and also periodically broke away to meet with staff members from the Speaker's office, expert staff from political party factions, expert staff from all 11 DPR Commissions, expert staff from the Legislative Council, and the Director of the DPR's information center. One measure of the intensity of the program was the fact that at two separate points during the visit, the Congressmen and staffers participated in six concurrent meetings at the DPR.

¶6. (U) In meetings with the DPR's Legislative Group and its Reform Implementation Team, Indonesian parliamentarians consistently highlighted the issue of inadequate funding as the DPR's most pressing concern. DPR members agreed with CODEL Payne's assessment that responsibility for staffing the DPR should no longer lie with the executive branch, and they demonstrated a sense of urgency about the need for greater reform. In a meeting with the DPR's Administration Committee, several parliamentarians shared their candid views about what they perceived as a USG effort to promote "U.S. style democracy in Indonesia." Congressman Dreier responded that HDAC sought simply to assist other legislatures by way of example and through the exchange of information and experiences. There was no such thing as a perfect democracy,

Dreier added, before noting that even with the benefit of over two hundred years of experience, the United States had room for improvement.

¶7. (U) During the course of their individual meetings with DPR members from the different factions, Congressmen Payne, Dreier, and Moran addressed questions about U.S. foreign policy, discussed concerns related to the impact of globalization, and reviewed a variety of other issues of mutual interest. In Congressman Payne's meeting with the largest party in the DPR, Golkar, he stressed the importance of interacting with one's constituents, and noted to the group's collective astonishment that he visits his district nearly every week. Several parliamentarians remarked that funding constraints precluded them from visiting their constituents more than once or twice a year. In Congressman Dreier's meeting with the second largest faction, PDI-P, and several smaller parties, Dreier presided over a lively exchange that touched on Iraq, Papua, and the challenges of democratic consolidation.

¶8. (U) In their July 11 meeting with Commission XI, the DPR committee charged with oversight of finance and banking issues, Congressmen Dreier and Payne emphasized that the U.S. Congress sets the federal budget. Congressmen Payne and Dreier then outlined for their Indonesian counterparts the detailed mechanics of the U.S. budget process, before underscoring the U.S. House's role in initiating all spending. Congressman Dreier pointed out that the House and Senate have the right to disagree with the President, and vice versa, before noting that the Framers crafted the Constitution in such a way that there would always be a healthy clash of ideas between the legislative and executive branches. In closing the meeting, both Dreier and Payne once again emphasized the importance of employing independent staff members directly accountable to their superiors, and emphasized that they would never allow outside influences to direct their staffing decisions.

¶9. (U) CODEL Payne has cleared this cable.
HUME